

Two new resident birds in northern Zambia

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Les auteurs ont récemment identifié deux espèces résidentes nouvelles pour la Zambie du nord: le Tisserin de Reichard *Ploceus reichardi* et la Bouscarle à ailes blanches *Bradypterus carpalis*. Le tisserin, qui fut découvert en janvier 1996, se trouve être commun le long de la Saisi, près de la frontière avec la Tanzanie, et ne semble pas menacé. L'espèce est considérée comme ayant une aire de répartition restreinte par BirdLife International; ainsi, la zone a-t-elle été proposée comme Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux (ZICO). En décembre 1996, la bouscarle fut découverte dans un marais de papyrus le long de la Luapula, près de Chabilikila. Cette zone a également été proposée comme ZICO. Avant cette observation, les sites les plus proches d'où l'espèce était connue se situaient dans le nord-ouest de la Tanzanie.

During three New Year trips in 1996–1998, we undertook fieldwork for the Zambia Bird Atlas Project³ in several wetlands on the country's northern border. Among our findings were two resident species previously unrecorded in Zambia: Lake Tanganyika Weaver *Ploceus reichardi* and White-winged Swamp-Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*.

Lake Tanganyika Weaver *Ploceus reichardi*

On 8–10 January 1996, we found Lake Tanganyika Weaver to be common along the Saisi River at the point where it enters Tanzania (08°58'S 31°40'E)^{4,7}. Its occurrence here is unsurprising given that the species was known to be present in nearby Tanzania. The Saisi River and its immediate tributaries constitute the only cross-border river system, draining into the Rukwa basin to which this species appears to be largely restricted. It therefore appears unlikely that the species will be found elsewhere in Zambia.

Lake Tanganyika Weaver is the third member of the masked weaver complex to be recorded in Zambia: *P. velatus* occurs in much of the south and east of the country and *P. katangae* in the Luapula drainage. The taxonomy of these forms is a matter of some debate; *P. reichardi* and *P. katangae* are swamp dwellers whereas *P. velatus* is not. They are allopatric (see Fig 1) and, although Dowsett & Forbes-Watson⁵ considered *P. reichardi* as conspecific with *P. ruweti* under the English name Lake Lufira Weaver, this treatment obscures the situation and Lake Tanganyika Weaver appears a more appropriate name (R. J. Dowsett pers comm).

Lake Tanganyika Weaver is considered a restricted-range species by BirdLife International⁶ and the site has been proposed as an Important Bird Area (IBA)⁹. In this area, the species appears unthreatened.

White-winged Swamp-Warbler

Bradypterus carpalis

On 30 December 1996, during fieldwork in papyrus swamp in the Luapula River near Chabilikila (09°32'S 28°42'E), we heard what appeared to be unusual Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* songs. However the birds, when seen, proved to be White-winged Swamp-Warblers^{4,8}, a species previously known from no nearer than north-west Tanzania.

The vocal similarities between White-winged Swamp-Warbler and Little Rush Warbler, which was also present, are remarkable. Both songs consist of an accelerating sequence of short *ch-rip* notes, often completed during an aerial wing-whirring display. In *carpalis*, the overall phrase lasts little more than 5 s, considerably shorter than that of *baboecala* which lasts 10–15 s or longer. The voice of *carpalis* is more metallic in timbre, with the notes being delivered faster and apparently at a higher pitch. Once, a bird was attracted by playing the song of *baboecala*

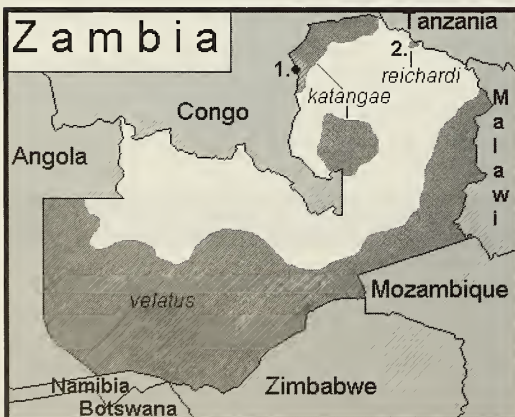


Figure 1. 1. Chabilikila (Luapula River); 2. Saisi River; dark grey—Zambian distributions of masked weavers; pale grey hatch—Zambian distribution of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris* and White-winged Swamp-Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*

speeded up by 20%. The wing-whirring is not consistently performed, and may be present in several short bursts or as a single longer sequence. In *baboecala* this display tends to be in 1–3 longer bursts. Many *carpalis* exhibit either an obvious drop in register or a general fall in pitch over the whole phrase whereas the song of *baboecala* remains at a constant pitch, but this is also an inconsistent feature. In other areas where the two species are sympatric, the voice of *baboecala* is very high-pitched unlike that of *carpalis*, which is on a much lower pitch (D. Turner pers. comm.). In Zambia, it is apparently *carpalis* that has altered its song with *baboecala* retaining its normal song.

The density of *carpalis* was estimated to be c2 pairs per ha in suitable habitat and the ratio of *carpalis* to *baboecala* was estimated as 3:1. White-winged Swamp-Warbler has subsequently been found in additional areas south to 10°02'S.

Interestingly, the species' global distribution resembles that of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris*, and in common with that species, the Zambian population of White-winged Warbler may represent a separate subspecies. Papyrus Yellow Warbler is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International² and consequently the papyrus swamp at the mouth of the Luapula has been proposed as an IBA. At present the only threat to the habitat is fire, but the nature and extent of this problem has yet to be investigated. It is worth noting that the Zambian subspecies of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *C. g. bensoni* is highly distinctive due to its white iris—a feature omitted from both the text and illustrations in Urban *et al*¹⁰.

References

1. Benson, C.W., Brooke, R.K., Dowsett, R.J. and Irwin, M.P.S. 1971. *The Birds of Zambia*. London, UK: Collins.
 2. Collar, N.J., Crosby, M.J. and Statterfield, A.J. 1994. *Birds to watch 2: the world checklist of threatened birds*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
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- Plates on page 58:
- 1 Adult male Lake Tanganyika Weaver *Ploceus reichardi*, Saiji River, 10 January 1996 (P. M. Leonard)
 - 2 Adult male Katanga Masked Weaver *Ploceus katangae*, 1 January 1998 (P. M. Leonard)
 - 3 Adult male African Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*, Kafue, 24 November 1997 (P. M. Leonard)
 - 4 Adult male Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris*, Chabilikila, 2 January 1998 (P. M. Leonard)
 - 5 Adult White-winged Swamp-Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*, Chabilikila, 2 January 1998 (P. M. Leonard)

3. Dowsett, R.J. and Aspinwall, D.R. in prep. *Zambia Bird Atlas*.
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5. Dowsett, R.J. and Forbes-Watson, A.D. 1993. *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions*. Liège: Tauraco Press.
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7. Leonard, P.M. and Beel, C. 1996. Lake Lufira Weaver (*Ploceus reichardi*)—new to Zambia. *Newsletter Zambian Orn. Soc.* 26 (1): 3–5.
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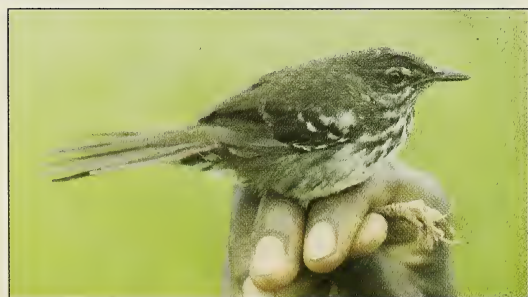
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